

Paul's Joyful Letter to the *Philippians*

CHAPTER 2: THE SUBMISSIVE MIND

In the first chapter, Paul wrote how the believer's mind must be focused on God. This chapter describes examples of individuals who applied that focus to life: Christ, Paul, Timothy and Epaphroditus.

Setting the Stage (2:1-4)

- 2:1 If you have any encouragement¹ from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love², if any fellowship³ with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, [¹*paraklesis*: exhortation to virtue; ²*agape*: Godly love; ³*koinonia*: communion] Being "united with Christ" means being brought into perfect fellowship with the Spirit² Corinthians 13:14 (with Jesus¹ Corinthians 1:9 and with the Father¹ John 1:3) and being saved from the condemnation of sin^{Romans 8:1, 6:14}, because of His forgiveness of sins^{John 3:16} flowing out from His eternal love^{Romans 8:38-39}. All Christians should exhibit "tenderness and compassion"^{Colossians 3:12}.
- 2:2 ...then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being (one in spirit)⁴ & purpose. [⁴*sumpsuchos*: souls together (lit)] The believer's joy will be complete when they fulfill their Godly calling. John the Baptist's joy was complete after he heard Jesus' voice, the one he was sent to proclaim^{John 3:29}. Paul pleaded later in his letter with two ladies in the church to be in agreement "in the Lord"^{Philippians 4:2-3}, indicating his deep desire for every follower of Jesus Christ to have a "spirit of unity"^{Romans 15:5-6}.
- 2:3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Conceit is an abomination before God^{Galatians 5:26}, because He commands Christians to "Honor one another above yourselves."^{Romans 12:10}, which is one of the most difficult characteristics of a true disciple. The only way a Christian can accomplish this is through humility "under God's mighty hand"^{1 Peter 5:5-7}.
- 2:4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. This verse is a practical perspective on the goal of putting a high priority on looking to the needs of others^{1 Corinthians 10:24}.

The (Ultimate) Example of Christ (2:5-11)

Jesus Thinks of Others, not Himself (2:5-6)

- 2:5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: The character traits discussed in the first four verses reflect the qualities expressed in the attitude of Jesus^{Matthew 11:29} during His Earthly life, which was the perfect example of the Godly perspective of humility and self-sacrifice that Christians should follow.
- 2:6 Who, being in very nature⁵ God⁶, did not consider equality with God something (to be grasped)⁷, [⁵*morphe*: form; ⁶*theos*: NT equivalent to OT *Elohim*; ⁷*harpagmos*: robbery] Even though He truly was one of the three persons in the Godhead (equal in "nature" to the Father^{Deuteronomy 6:4, John 10:30, 14:9, 2 Peter 1:4}), Jesus chose to veil His deity to live as the perfect man of servanthood^{Isaiah 42:1, Matthew 23:11}. In this verse,

Paul made it clear that Jesus taught mankind not to think that they were capable of attaining Godhood. Even more, Jesus was the ultimate model of the principle of considering others before self^{v.3-4}.

Biblical examples of created beings trying to be God:

- † Lucifer (the "morning star", the "king of Tyre", Satan, devil) ^{Isaiah 14:12-15, Ezekiel 28:11-19}
- † Adam & Eve ^{Genesis 3:1-7}

Jesus Serves (2:7)

2:7 ...but (made) himself (nothing)⁸, taking the very nature⁵ of a servant⁹, being made in human¹⁰ likeness.

[⁸kenoo: make empty; ⁹doulos: bond slave; ¹⁰anthropos: man, as distinct from God and animals]

Using human wisdom, Jesus did the unthinkable and stepped off of the throne of the universe to become a man ^{John 1:1,14} (in the "likeness of sinful man" ^{Romans 8:3}) and not simply a man, but a servant ^{Matthew 20:28}.

Jesus Sacrifices (2:8)

2:8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient¹¹ to death – even death on a cross! [¹¹hupekoos: obedience to the will of God the Father] Jesus looked like other men with "no beauty or majesty to attract us to him" ^{Isaiah 53:2}, living in total submission to His Father's will ^{Matthew 26:39}, including His willingness to die (worst of human trials), and even death on a cross, for mankind ^{Hebrews 12:2}.

Jesus Glorifies God the Father (and Jesus is Glorified) (2:9-11)

2:9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, As a result of His complete obedience to the Father's will, God glorified His Son ^{Isaiah 52:13, Daniel 7:13-14, Acts 2:32-33} with the most prominent name in all of the universe for all time ^{Psalms 138:2, 148:13 7:14, Revelation 19:16}.

2:10-11 ...that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Eventually, everyone will worship Jesus by bowing at His feet ^{Psalms 95:6} and speaking out loud of His absolute greatness ^{Isaiah 45:23}.

There are only two choices for every human: (1) to bow and speak to Him out of reverence, using free will while alive, and accept His grace (salvation) or (2) to do it after death when facing the Great White Throne to receive the justice of condemnation and eternal separation ^{Revelation 20:11-15} from the LORD ^{John 13:13}.

Jesus also modeled man's ultimate design: to live a life of glory to God ^{Romans 15:5-6, 1 Corinthians 10:31}.

In the lives of Christians, relationships are of vital importance (the model of Jesus), by:

- † Honoring one another ^{Romans 12:10}
- † Encouraging one another ^{1 Thessalonians 5:11}
- † Bearing each other's burdens ^{Galatians 6:2}
- † Loving one another ^{Matthew 5:43-48}
- † Not assuming to judge as Christ judges ^{Matthew 7:1-2, Romans 14:13}
- † Admonishing one another ^{Matthew 7:3-5, Romans 15:14, Colossians 3:16, 1 Thessalonians 3:16}

The Example of Paul (2:12-18)

The Examples of Timothy & Epaphroditus (2:19-30)